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Courtship and Marriage

Some Counsels for
Women and Girls



By the
Rev. G. Longridge, B.A.
Of the Community of the Resurrection

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Second impression, completing 35,000 copies



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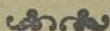
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Courtship and Marriage



I

THE DAYS OF COURTSHIP

(1) IMPORTANCE OF A HIGH IDEAL OF MARRIAGE

IT is an old saying that marriages are made in heaven, and surely there is a sense in which this is most true. Marriage is what GOD intends for most men and most women, and can we believe that, intending this, GOD leaves their union for life to mere accident? Is it not more reasonable, as well as more in accordance with the Fatherhood of GOD, to believe that He our FATHER has a real interest in, and does take a real part, if we will let Him, in bringing together those for whom marriage is His will?

And what an inspiring thought this ought to be to every maiden who looks forward to being one day a help "meet," or worthy, of the man who shall win her love! "If GOD

intends me to marry," so she may truly say, "then there is one as yet unknown to me, whom GOD is even now preparing to be my husband." What a new light this thought would pour upon her life! She would surely do her best to put away all selfishness or vanity or wilfulness, and would desire to consecrate all that she is and has in preparation for that life of wedded love which is one day to be hers. Purity and health, both of body and mind, knowledge of those things which she will need as wife and mother, and the continual deepening of her spiritual life, will be her constant care.

It is sometimes supposed that young women should not think about marriage until they are engaged. There are silly and so-called romantic ways of speaking and thinking of this most holy union in which, alas, many girls indulge, and which are thoroughly demoralizing and bad: and wise mothers will be careful to turn their daughters' thoughts on this subject into healthy and right directions. They will teach them what a holy and sacred thing marriage is, and that their preparation for marriage concerns the training of their body, their mind, and their soul: and they will not allow their children to grow out of their childhood without some clear teaching about their physical nature and the

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propagation of life. How many unhappy marriages are due to the fact that there was no real preparation, no real understanding of what marriage meant, no looking to GOD for guidance on the part of those married, no thought that their FATHER in heaven cared for or was interested in their marriage, or that their marriage was a union most holy and sacred because it was the result of a divine call and full of the deep mysteries of life and love.

(2) A GIRL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS MEN

It is right and quite inevitable that boys and girls, young women and young men, should mix much together: but it is important for both her present and future happiness that a girl should remember wherein her true value in the eyes of all honourable and good men really lies.

A girl should do her best to dress quietly and well, according to her station in life: but to seek to attract men by the smartness or extravagance of her dress, still more by any, even the least, immodesty in dress, is to degrade her womanhood, and to make all good men turn away from her. For the same reason no girl who valued her self-respect would encourage flattery from men: and if a man presumed to attempt anything of the kind, she would at once stop him in such a way that he would not venture to attempt it again.

Any girl who looks forward to making a really happy marriage with a man worthy of her love will be particularly careful to make it practically impossible for any young man to attempt familiarities or in any way to

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suggest caressing, hand-pressing, kissing, fondling, or anything of that sort. "No intelligent young woman intentionally compromises herself in the eyes of any man. But unintentionally and unconsciously not a few do cheapen themselves, if indeed they do not destroy their reputations, through an over-ardent and inconsiderate desire to be 'agreeable.' The girl, though she may escape any serious wrong-doing, is soiled and messed by over-much handling: she becomes 'shop-worn,' or 'second-hand goods,' and, by the world's best judges, is invoiced at a discount. While many young men may seem attracted, pleased, and entertained by it, still, somehow, and for sufficient reason, they distrust it and, eventually, they seek other girls for better companionship. The girl who by a dignified but cordial and ingenuous conduct, compels a young man instinctively to keep his proper distance, in speech and in behaviour, commands thereby his most profound respect, and at the same time she secures for herself the best reputation, the purest character, and the keenest satisfaction."¹

Flirting, again, whether it be merely in fun or seriously, is quite inexcusable; and a girl who flirts must be prepared to be treated

¹ This and other thoughts expressed in this paper I owe to the writings of Mr. L. W. Sperry.

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in the same way by men. Moreover she will always be in danger of having any real affection she may feel for a man mistaken for a mere flirtation, and may in consequence suffer bitter humiliation and pain. It is worse than downright meanness for a woman or a man to trifle with each other in a matter of such importance as love and marriage.

(3) FALLING IN LOVE

True love—the sort of love that leads eventually to marriage—may show itself suddenly, as we say, “at first sight”; or it may be a matter of gradual growth. But in either case it is of the first importance that those who think themselves in love should carefully consider and examine whether the grounds of what they think to be love are real and right and abiding. To wed in haste and then to repent at leisure—the leisure of a life-long unhappy marriage—is, alas, not an uncommon experience, and is due to the fact that what was thought to be love was not really love at all.

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(4) COURTSHIP

One and perhaps the main purpose of courtship is to give an opportunity to both the man and the woman to test the character of the attraction which they feel towards each other. "A rational courtship," it has been said, "is a large factor in one's real education, whether it leads to marriage, or to the conviction that the two are not intended for each other." And not only is it a time to test the nature of the attraction which has drawn them together, but also to feel and learn the character of each other—to study each other's tastes and peculiarities—to gain a knowledge of each other's principles and habits and inward desires. It is astonishing how many couples marry with hardly any knowledge of each other's real character, with the result that often after the wedding-day there is a rude awakening and a bitter disappointment, arising from the gradual discovery that they are not suited to live together in the closeness of the married life.

There are three things which a woman would always do well to find out before she agrees to any definite engagement: (a) the

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real character of the man who is courting her. This she will largely discover, if she is a healthy, right-minded girl, by her own woman's wit, and by her observation of his conduct when he is with other people, or is unconscious of her presence. But if the girl is wise she will do more than this; she will be at pains, quietly and prudently, to make inquiries of those she knows she can trust, and who have personal knowledge of the man, of what sort he is, and what have been his antecedents. If the report she receives is doubtful, she would do well to be very careful before she commits herself to him for life. And here I would wish to give a plain and strong warning. Many a woman thinks that, once married, she will have power to change the character and habits of her husband, and marries a man largely because she thinks she can save him from the faults and sins which mark his character. "When we are once married he will give up that for my sake," many a woman has said or thought. And many a woman has been grievously disappointed. Be sure of this—that if a man will not really and honestly break with what is mean and wrong when he is seeking to win a wife, he will not give up the wrong thing when he has won her. For the happiness of married life high principle and honesty of

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character in the husband is everything ; if that is absent the result of marriage can only be unhappiness.

A fair amount of similarity in their tastes is another important matter. It is not necessary that husband and wife should think exactly the same on every point, or be interested in exactly the same things—probably a certain amount of difference in tastes and opinions is healthy and good ; but if there is any very great divergence in thought or in tastes, it may lead either to husband and wife living their life practically apart, or to continual disputes between them, and either of these alternatives is incompatible with a really happy married life.

(b) A second thing a woman should be most careful about is to find out the religious opinions of the man she thinks of marrying. Extraordinary as it may seem, this is a matter which many who marry appear to think is of no importance. And yet it is the very foundation of any real happiness. A marriage between two people belonging to different religious bodies or of strongly divergent religious opinions is seldom a happy one, and must, when children come, make very serious difficulties in their bringing-up. If marriage is to be what GOD means it to be, and if it is to bear the strain of

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sorrow, sickness, difficulty, and anxiety from which no married people are or can expect to be altogether free, a common and united religious faith is the only power which can give peace and strength and bring real inward joy.

(c) Thirdly, a woman will do well to take financial matters into consideration. "Love in a cottage" is very well in theory, but often uncommonly uncomfortable and disastrous in practice. But while on the one hand improvident marriages are to be condemned, on the other hand the idea that a man and woman cannot marry unless they can ensure all the luxuries to which they have been accustomed is an utterly false one. It is beyond dispute that the standard of living in many ranks of society is ridiculously extravagant and unchristian. If a young man has trained the gifts which GOD has given to him, and has a trade or profession which promises a reasonably certain and gradually increasing income, and if the maiden whom he marries is healthy in body and mind, simple in tastes, and wise in heart and soul, they may be poor as the world counts wealth, but there is no reason why their married life should not be abundantly rich in love, in interest, in work and in simple enjoyments. Under these conditions they will be

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thoroughly happy and able to bring up as many children as GOD shall see fit to send them, as healthy and effective citizens, loving sons and daughters, and humble and happy servants of GOD.

(5) CONDUCT DURING COURTSHIP

A woman who values her character will be careful to guard against any undue intimacy; and no girl who is wise will permit an admirer to spend much time with her when no other human eye can see. She will remember that courtships do not necessarily end in marriage, and that while there is no definite engagement between them, neither is bound to the other. The days of courtship should be characterized by simple dignity and frankness, by good sense, mingled with a moderate amount of sentiment, and free from all silly mystery or secrecy. Such a courtship leads naturally and happily to a definite engagement, and carries with it nothing but the happiest memories.

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(6) ENGAGEMENT

An engagement is equivalent to the betrothal of the woman to the man, and is the last step before the actual wedding. But even a betrothal is not certain to issue in marriage; and a woman would do well to bear this in mind. It is, alas! a very common idea that betrothal gives the same rights as marriage, or anyhow that it is not a great sin for those who are engaged to anticipate what marriage allows. Let it be understood quite clearly that any undue intimacy or wrong act between an engaged couple is sin—and a sin which is not covered or excused by subsequent marriage. Marriage may indeed hide the act from the eyes of the world, but the man or the woman who in the days of their engagement lose their self-control, begin their married life under the shadow of a great sin: while many a woman who has yielded to the unmanly solicitations of her lover, has found herself deserted by him and left to bear alone the whole burden of the shame.

For this reason it is best that not more than a few months should intervene between an

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engagement and the wedding. During this interval the young man should understand that the fact of his engagement does not give him the right to the freedom of his fiancée's home: and the girl should understand that her lover is not her slave, nor is he to be expected to spend every spare hour in her company.

Both should see a reasonable amount of each other and have time to discuss quietly together their plans for the future, and occupy themselves in their different ways with the necessary work which is required for entering on their new life and home. It has been well said that during this time "understandings should be well settled, and confidences thoroughly established; and, as a rule, not more than a year should intervene between the engagement and marriage. Protracted engagements are apt to be both physically and mentally unhealthful."

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(7) CASES IN WHICH MARRIAGE IS
UNDESIRABLE OR WRONG

We have already spoken of the great difficulties which must follow when husband and wife belong to different religious bodies or are of strongly divergent religious opinions. Marriages between such can seldom be happy. Husband and wife cannot ever be really one in heart and soul unless they are united in their spiritual life and in true fellowship with God.

But differences of religious convictions are not the only obstacles to a right and happy marriage. There are degrees of kinship within which marriage is prohibited, and though in one instance—that of marriage with a deceased wife's sister—the State has now legalized such marriages, it must be remembered that the Church has not altered her law in this matter, and that she still refuses to give her blessing to such unions. Marriages between first cousins, though not absolutely forbidden by the Church, have always been—as indeed they ought to be—discouraged on account of the nearness of kinship; and also from the fact that in a very large number of

cases the children of such marriages are either very weakly, or mentally deficient, or born with some physical defect.

Again, it is surely both selfish and wrong for either a man or a woman to marry, who is conscious of some inherited wrong tendency, such as a predisposition to insanity, or who is suffering from some physical disease, such as consumption. Both the man and the woman owe it to each other, and also to the children who may be born of them, that they are each not only pure in heart, but also healthy in mind and body. It may appear in many cases hard to be restricted from what may seem the one thing needed to make life happy; but surely to any right-minded man or woman the hardship of abstaining from marriage is a light thing compared to the misery of feeling that they have handed on a heritage of moral or physical misery to their offspring, or have brought sickness and unhappiness to the partner of their life.

If, unfortunately, an engagement has taken place between a man and a woman, and one of them is conscious of some hindrance such as we have mentioned, it is their bounden duty to tell the other quite frankly of it, and to be prepared to break off the engagement if it should seem right to do so. Where

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there is no such hindrance, and the engagement is in other respects right and happy, then both can look forward with thankfulness and joy to their wedding-day.

II

MARRIAGE

(I) THE NEW HOME

THERE are perhaps few things in the later days of courtship more interesting than the preparation of the new home. There is the house to be chosen and furnished, and sometimes the situation to be selected. Probably in most cases this will be more or less decided by the husband's work and occupation. But even then there is often some room for choice; and when this is so, surely one great element in the choice of where to live should be nearness to a church where there are full opportunities for all spiritual needs. It is extraordinary how seldom this consideration is taken into account. People think much of scenery, social conditions, nearness to their business, convenience as to trams, trains and shops, but often leave the question of nearness to a church, and of the kind of church, out of account. And yet since religion is the source, and only source, of the real happiness of a

home, the question of nearness to a church, and of the sort of services which may be had there, is surely of the first importance. How often in the trials and anxieties of life may not both husband and wife find their strength and guidance, their peace and courage in their Church, which has become to them a spiritual home!

The new home having been chosen, there is next all the interest of furnishing and preparing it. Happy are those who are content to begin their married life very simply, beginning with a house and household and a standard of living well within their means, and thus from the very first being able to put by something for a rainy day, and escaping that most miserable of all miseries, living right up to or even beyond one's income. Simplicity in furniture and in one's way of living is compatible with the truest happiness; and when money is not wasted on display, there is always something with which to buy books and pictures, and gradually to add to the treasures and beauty of the home.

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(2) THE WEDDING

Those who are wise will resolutely set their faces against a large and showy wedding. A great crowd of people and much display are surely not the best accompaniments to one of the most solemn and holy days in a man and woman's life. The result is not happiness, but much expense, much worry, and much fatigue.

The Prayer Book tells us that it is "expedient"—that is, right and suitable—that the newly-married couple should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage. And surely there can be no more happy or blessed beginning to married life than for husband and wife to kneel together on their wedding day to receive the "Bread of Life." For this reason it is best, where it is possible, that the wedding should be early in the morning, so that the Marriage Service may take place, as the Prayer Book intends it should, at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. * If this is not possible, and the wedding takes place in the afternoon, the bride and bridegroom should make their

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Communion at an early celebration on the same day.

Let the guests be the relations and real friends of those who are to be married; and let them remember that they are invited, not merely to a social entertainment, but to take their part in a solemn service, and to ask GOD'S blessing on the newly-married couple with real and earnest prayer.

Those who are to be married ought to read over very carefully the words of the Marriage Service, and to consider seriously the meaning of the solemn promises which each is about to make, and what is involved in them. For this purpose they might read a small book, published by S.P.C.K., called *A Devotional Explanation of the Marriage Service*.¹ A careful study of the service will show the great sacredness with which the Church regards marriage, and the wonderful and rich blessings which she bestows on those who are married with her blessing.

¹ By Rev. G. Longridge: S.P.C.K., Northumberland Avenue, Charing Cross, price 1d., postage $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

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(3) THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

“Those whom GOD hath joined together let no man put asunder,” are the solemn words with which the Church announces the union of the man and the woman in Holy Matrimony. No words in the whole service need in these days to be more carefully considered. The Divorce Act of 1857 has on this point brought the law of the State into direct conflict with that of the Church, but the Church has never relaxed her law. It is sometimes supposed that the Church allows divorce in certain cases. This is not the fact, if by divorce is meant the liberty of the man or the woman during the life of either to marry again. The only kind of separation which the Church allows is that which the Civil Law now calls a “judicial separation,” which gives no liberty of re-marriage. It is true that in some cases the Church has sanctioned re-marriage; this has, however, not been on the ground that a marriage once made could be dissolved, but on the ground that the marriage was void from the

first, i.e., that through some cause it was never a marriage at all.

On this point the Church in her Prayer Book is absolutely plain and uncompromising. She takes her stand on the words of our LORD Himself, "What GOD hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (*S. Matt.* xix. 6; *S. Mark* x. 9.) And in the prayer at the end of the service she says that GOD, "knitting them together, did teach that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom by matrimony He had made one." In this sense, and in this sense only, do the man and the woman make their promise "to keep only unto each other as long as they both shall live," and to be faithful to each other "till death us do part." No words can be more plain, no promise can be more binding. In view of the sad disregard on the part of so many people of this most solemn promise, and of the reckless way in which, in so many classes of society, the sanctity of marriage is being violated, all who desire GOD'S blessing on our nation, and the preservation of home life, will do well to weigh most earnestly and to do their best to bring to the notice of all who are married or are about to marry, two very solemn declarations put forth at two successive meetings of the Lambeth Conference. In 1897 the one hundred and ninety-four

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bishops there present affirmed that "the maintenance of the dignity and sanctity of marriage lies at the root of social purity, and therefore of the safety and sacredness of the family and the home. The foundation of its holy security and honour is the precept of our LORD, 'What GOD hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' We utter our most earnest words of warning against the lightness with which the lifelong vow of marriage is often taken; against the looseness with which those who enter into this estate often regard its obligations; and against the frequency and facility of recourse to the Courts of Law for the dissolution of this most solemn bond." (*Encyclical Letter*, Lambeth Conference, 1897, p. 15.)

In the Lambeth Conference of 1908, at which no less than two hundred and forty-two Bishops were assembled, the Committee, which was appointed to report on questions connected with Marriage, spoke with absolute plainness with regard to those who are divorced and marry again:—"For the formation of a clean public opinion, and for its practical outcome in the refusal to be in social relations with adulterers and adulteresses (i.e., divorced persons who are re-married), the Committee would most earnestly appeal to clean-living women in all the many

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ranks and grades of life. Pure women are the great human power for good in this cause, and not in this cause only. They can apply a punishment which will soon prove to be remedial in its effect; they can refuse to have social relations with adulteress or adulterer. If they will be brave in this vital matter, the Committee are clearly of opinion that the flood of evil can be stemmed and turned." (*Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1908*, pp. 140, 141.)

(4) THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE WAS INSTITUTED

Another thing of the utmost importance is that those who are going to be married should carefully consider the purposes for which marriage was instituted by GOD. It is only when husband and wife are faithful to these purposes that they can look for GOD'S blessing on their married life. They are set forth in the Marriage Service under three heads:—

1. *"Marriage was ordained for the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the LORD, and to the praise of His holy Name."*

This, then, is the first and most sacred purpose of marriage, the perpetuation and increase of the human race. "The true wealth of a nation," says Mr. Ruskin, "lies in producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures." "There is no wealth but life. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings." This is true, because it is in accord-

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ance with the purpose of GOD, Who when He blessed our first parents laid upon them this command—"to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." This command has never been withdrawn. One of the gravest and most serious signs of decadence in our own day lies in the fact that in a continually increasing number, married people are evading or frustrating this first and most holy purpose of marriage. There is a perfectly legitimate self-restraint which may be exercised for many right reasons; but there are also practices morally wrong, to which S. Paul significantly attaches the epithet of "unfruitful," and with which he warns us that we are to have no fellowship. (*Eph. v. 11.*) If the first and sacred purpose of marriage is unnaturally prevented, such acts must bring on the individual and on the nation a sure and terrible punishment. Doctors are again and again declaring the wickedness as well as the seriously injurious physical results of such practices, both to the man and the woman; while history proclaims with no uncertain voice the fate of that nation which tolerates the crowning crime of race suicide.

2. *"Marriage was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of*

continency might marry and keep themselves undefiled members of CHRIST'S Body."

The second purpose of marriage is the maintenance of purity. There is GOD'S law of purity for the single, and there is also GOD'S law of purity for the married. Those who are married need to remember this, and to bear in mind that a mere sensual and unrestrained use of marriage is contrary to GOD'S law, both spiritual and physical, and is a violation of true purity.

3. *"Marriage was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity."*

This opens up thoughts of wonderful tenderness, unselfishness, and love. "Marriage," says S. Paul, "is a great mystery, because therein is signified the union betwixt CHRIST and His Church." So close is the union of husband and wife, that they are indeed not two but one flesh; so wonderful is this mystery of married love, that it signifies the love of CHRIST for His Bride the Church. But such a union and such love as this, so full of the deepest mystery, can obviously only be realized when, on the part of both

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husband and wife, there is a real sense of the great sacredness of the married life, and a real effort after unselfishness and self-discipline. Husband and wife, if they are to know the wonderful happiness of married life, must remember how much discipline it will involve for each of them. They must remember that the two lives which have been hitherto lived separately have now in marriage to be harmonized. There will be differences of opinion, differences of temperament and of taste, differences of interests ; for each will bring to the other his and her own life, with its special capacities and characteristics. It would not be good that it should be otherwise, for personality is one of the most sacred of all things. The two individualities must be maintained, but they must be harmonized. Where there are differences of opinion they must be held without friction ; where there is divergence of taste, it must be without selfishness ; where there are differences of interests they must not be allowed to break the fellowship of the common life.

“ Mutual society, help, and comfort.” It is the call to the husband to forget himself, and to live and think for his wife ; it is the call to the wife to live for her husband. In such self-forgetfulness, in such unselfishness, in

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such merging of the life of each in the life and interests of the other, love grows deeper and stronger. It is purified and uplifted, or rather it is more and more felt to be the love of GOD which, coming down from Him, and meeting the response of love in the heart of each, binds both to Himself, and in Him to one another.

(5) THE SOURCES OF HAPPINESS IN MARRIED LIFE

Faithfulness to the threefold purpose of marriage is the first and greatest guarantee of the continued happiness of married life. This, in the presence of the manifold temptations of life, and especially of our own time, is no easy task, and one which can indeed only be accomplished by the help of the grace of GOD. The old paths of prayer and worship, Communion, and study of the Bible, are still, whatever the modern world may say, the paths of holiness and peace and happiness. Many a marriage which has begun most happily, has sunk into what is commonplace and dull, and often into worse, just because fellowship with GOD has been broken or forgotten. Happy are the husband and wife to whom religion is a great reality, and who pray together, who kneel side by side at GOD'S altar, and whose Sundays are kept as days of holy and happy intercourse and peace.

On a lower scale, and yet of very great importance to the happiness of married life, is the maintenance of those courtesies and

tokens of thoughtfulness and love which marked the days of courtship. A man should be more, not less, courteous and considerate towards his wife than towards other women. That man has no true sense of manliness and no true perception of the beauty of married love, who thinks that when he is married his courting days are over, and that it is the duty of his wife to minister to all his wants; nor is that woman wise who, in the impulse of wifely devotion, imagines that she is acting the part of a true wife by unceasingly waiting upon her husband. He was a wise man who, a few weeks after his marriage, spoke thus to his wife:—"My dear, it is all very well just now, when you have little to occupy your time, that you should wait upon me so sweetly, but it is not wise. In the first place, I shall in all probability grow selfish and exacting, and expect you to continue your care, even if you have no time or strength. Then, as time goes on, and you are more and more burdened, you will be over-taxed by the loving tasks you have imposed on yourself, and I shall be blind to see it, just as I have noticed so many husbands are. It seems to me we had better begin on the right basis—I waiting on you, caring for you, and looking after my own

belongings. It will take me no longer to hang up my coat and hat than before I was married. My mother taught me to get out my own clean clothes and to pack my own valise, so it will be no hardship to continue it. I appreciate all the attentions your love has prompted, but believe me, dear, I am wiser in this than you.”¹

The writer who quoted these words bears witness to the happiness of that home, and tells how in later years the children learnt from the husband that it was a real joy to “save mother trouble.”

But, on the other hand, the wife, while she refuses to spoil her husband by taking up those personal duties which belong to him, will be careful to show her appreciation of his thoughtfulness of her, and always to give a courteous acknowledgement of the service he renders to her. She will watch for those moments when he is tired or troubled, and, however busy she may be, will be ready to give him such tender sympathy and help that he will see that his care for her has not made her selfish, but has quickened her love towards him.

To the husband, all through the years of married life, his wife should be his queen, and

¹ Dr. M. Allen Wood, *The Ideal Married Life*.

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to the wife her husband should be the one for whom she keeps all that is best and noblest and sweetest that she has. As lovers they gave their troth one to the other ; as lovers they should go through life together. The "lady love" and the "knight without reproach" may seem to belong to the far-off days of romance, but they are reproduced in every husband and wife who have really entered into the true meaning of holy marriage.

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(6) CONCLUSION

The maintenance of *Christian* marriage and of a high ideal of purity and love with regard to married life, lies at the root of national prosperity and of the blessings of home life. It is a serious consideration that in our day the sacredness and indissolubility of marriage are being attacked from many sides, and that there is a strong and determined effort on the part of some to introduce into the conception of marriage ideas and practices which are absolutely unchristian, and even to advocate the abolition of the marriage tie altogether. If the Christian ideal of marriage is lost, the downfall of our Empire is certain to follow. History teaches this plainly and surely. The danger is no imaginary one, and we have written this paper in full view of some of the chief dangers which threaten to destroy married life, and with it the beauty and joy of our English homes.

Marriage, we believe, is what GOD intends for most men and women, and there are few ways in which both men and women can serve their country better than by doing their

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utmost to maintain the Christian standard and ideal of married life; let them set their faces resolutely against, and do their utmost to stamp out, those unchristian and anti-social views and practices which, where they are tolerated and prevalent, will inevitably destroy, like a horrible cancer, the nation's life.

But if there are dark clouds, there is also light and hope in the faith, the sincerity, the sound moral fibre and manly religion of the mass of the English people. If the danger is real—and no one who knows what is being written and thought about marriage can doubt that it is—yet the remedy and victory are in our own hands. Faithfulness in action, loyalty to principle—that is possible for us all. Remembering the vastness of the issues, there is nothing to which men and women who love this England of ours are called more clearly to bear their witness, than to the sacredness of holy marriage, the indissolubility of the marriage bond, and the need for the Church and for the nation to struggle together to preserve uncontaminated the tender sanctities of home.

But the blessings of marriage are not only for this life. That tender, sacred tie which GOD Himself has made between husband and wife lasts on beyond the grave. The physical aspects of marriage may belong

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only to this life, but love, the love of husband and wife, the centre of all married life—so wonderful, so full of the deepest mystery and beauty—lasts on and lasts into eternity. Then in the life to come it will realize its true ideal and find its perfect and unending satisfaction in the Presence of GOD.



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